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Letter dated 17 December 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 17 December 1996, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Osman Ertuğ, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex, which contains a letter dated 17 December 1996, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Rauf R. Denktaş, President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, would be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Letter dated 17 December 1996 from Mr. Osman Ertuğ
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of a letter dated 17 December 1996, addressed to you by His Excellency President Rauf R. Denktaş, in connection with the recent acceleration in the Greek Cypriot military build-up and escalation in southern Cyprus in the context of the "joint defence doctrine" with Greece, and the danger it poses to the peace and stability of the region (see appendix).

I shall be grateful if the text of the present letter and its appendix could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Osman ERTUĞ
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

APPENDIX

Letter dated 17 December 1996 from Mr. Rauf R. Denktaş, addressed to the Secretary-General

The Greek Cypriot side has recently stepped up its strategy of military escalation and the military build-up in south Cyprus has reached massive proportions, with the announcement of plans to buy sophisticated offensive weapons systems in addition to the already acquired tanks and missiles.

Over recent years, the Greek Cypriot side has intensified its rearmament campaign in line with the so-called "joint defence doctrine" signed with Greece, with new additions being made to the Greek Cypriot military arsenal every day.

In early December, the Greek Cypriot Council of Ministers has increased the defence levy from 3 to 4 per cent, in order to generate additional funds for the excessive military purchases. The Greek Cypriot administration has recently announced that a sum of US$ 2,632 million will be allocated for arms purchases in accordance with the next five-year defence programme.

It has been reported in the Greek Cypriot press that the new five-year arming programme of the Greek Cypriot National Guard was taken up during the visit to south Cyprus of the Greek Defence Minister Akis Tsohatzopoulos between 21 and 24 November 1996. According to the decisions taken during this visit, the Greek Cypriot side will purchase new missile systems, including Russian made S-300 V anti-aircraft missiles, surface-to-surface missiles, Mil-28 attack helicopters, war-planes and tanker aircraft. With the purchase of S-300V, CSS-6 and CSS-7 missiles, it is stressed, the Greek Cypriot side will acquire the capability to hit targets in Turkey. It has also been confirmed that the construction at Paphos in south Cyprus of an air force base for Greece will be completed by the end of 1997. It has been reported that similar airfields will be built on the Aegean Islands. It will be recalled that the construction of a naval base between Zyyi and Moni in south Cyprus is already under way.

The armaments programme of the Greek Cypriot side was also discussed during the recent visit of the Greek Cypriot Defence Minister, Mr. Eliades to Athens. Mr. Eliades told reporters on 11 December 1996 that "there was a total identity of views on all issues (between Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration) and that programmes concerning infrastructure works (i.e., Paphos military base), armaments and training would go ahead as planned".

It was also announced that in addition to the annual Nikiforos/Toxotis exercises scheduled for October 1997, joint military exercises between south Cyprus and Greece, under the code-name Bergina, would be held in south Cyprus in March 1997 with the participation of Greek warplanes. It is rather interesting, to say the least, that this announcement follows the rejectionist stand the Greek-Greek Cypriot front took on the United States proposal to ban military over-flights in Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Clerides, upon his return to south Cyprus from the meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Lisbon, had made it clear that the Greek Cypriot side was not prepared to accept the idea of having a moratorium on over-flights

for a specific period of time. The implementation of the "joint defence doctrine", he stressed, would not be undermined in any way and the construction of military bases in south Cyprus would continue as planned.

That the so-called "joint defence doctrine" is being implemented in a totally provocative and aggressive manner cannot be disputed. A case in point demonstrating the true nature of the joint Greek-Greek Cypriot front has been the massive joint military exercises carried out under slogans "Greece is here" and "Cyprus Hellenism is secure" during October 1996. The joint manoeuvres, which turned out to be a real show of force, with the participation of the Greek Air Force and Navy were clearly offensive in character, involving war scenarios designed to be conducted in areas encircling the island with the professed aim of "recapturing lost territory". It is noteworthy that Mr. Clerides who stressed during the exercises that "the joint military doctrine is here to stay and will proceed as planned" had already made their ultimate aim clear in pursuing this confrontational posture when he stated that "... when the time comes, Hellenism will be resurrected in north Cyprus" (Simerini, 4 April 1996).

The Greek Cypriot administration spends in excess of $2 million daily on armaments which means it spends a higher percentage of its gross domestic product on arms than most other countries, including the United States. Furthermore, Greek nationals have already been recruited into the Greek Cypriot National Guard under a recent scheme to boost the active strength of the Greek Cypriot army by adding up to 5,000 new personnel. At present, the Greek Cypriot army has 80,000-100,000 reservists and a large number of paramilitary forces (militia) in addition to an active force of 20,000. The Greek Cypriot Defence Minister, Mr. Eliades, has proposed to increase the Greek army volunteers, which stand presently at 500 to 1,500, and to place Greek Cypriot reservists on the front lines.

The continuing rearmament programme in south Cyprus, construction of an air base in Paphos and the planned purchase of medium and long-range missiles are clearly offensive steps, rather than defensive as alleged by the Greek Cypriot side, and constitute a serious provocation towards the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey. Such confrontational and negative posture will further exacerbate the already tense situation and increase tension both in the island and the region. The following words of the spokesman for the Greek Cypriot administration, Mr. Yannakis Cassoulides, encapsulates the aggressive nature of the military preparations in south Cyprus: "If we are sure that our armed forces will victoriously reach Kyrenia, and the reverse will not happen enabling the Turks to reach Limassol then we may resort to armed struggle" (Astra Radio in the south).

The policy of escalation and tension pursued by the Greek Cypriot side and Greece threatens the peace and equilibrium in our region. It needs to be stressed that the countries which continue to sell arms to the Greek Cypriot administration will bear the responsibility for any new conflict in the region which may arise as a result of the adventurous policies of the Greek Cypriot administration.

I have repeatedly called upon the Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Clerides, to resume talks in order to reduce the tension in the island, to initiate a

dialogue and to put our heads together as early as possible with a view to preventing yet another tragedy and finding a mutually acceptable resolution to end our differences. I expressed my belief that the historic responsibility to prevent another crisis, to reverse the present dangerous trend of escalation and to achieve a resolution rests with Mr. Clerides and I, as elected leaders of our respective communities. Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriot leader has not only failed to respond positively to my calls, but has opted to continue with the policy of escalation and tension in the island.

It is incumbent upon the international community to make a concerted effort to make sure that the Greek Cypriot side abandons its current confrontational posture before it is too late, and starts engaging in meaningful dialogue with the Turkish Cypriot side, within the framework of your good offices mission, in the interest of a peaceful solution in Cyprus.

(Signed) Rauf R. Denktaş
President